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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT PASS TO EAP/MLS; EAP/RSP; EAP/EP

State for USTR E. Bryan

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [ETRD](#) [AMGT](#) [OVIP](#) [IZ](#) [VM](#) [APEC](#) [CVR](#) [WTO](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR DISCUSSES IRAQI CONSTITUTION, APEC EXPORT CONTROLS, WTO ACCESSION, NEW EMBASSY, CATFISH

Reftel: State 158420

SUMMARY

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**¶1.** (SBU) During an August 30 meeting with Vice Foreign Minister Le Van Bang, Ambassador Marine raised the USG desire to know whether GVN will co-host the APEC Export Controls Conference and Post's hope to sign a contract within weeks for land for the new embassy compound. The Ambassador also delivered reftel's points on the new Iraqi Constitution and noted National Security Advisor Hadley's agreement to meet with the Vietnamese Foreign Minister on September 23. VFM Bang raised the GVN's desire to make progress in its bilateral WTO accession negotiations and explained that the GVN will inform Post soon of its desiderata for the FM's proposed meeting with the Secretary. He reiterated that the GVN understands the importance of the APEC export controls meeting but wants to proceed carefully before committing to a conference because of its possible impact on U.S./Vietnam/China relations. He expressed GVN's desire to work with the USG to conclude a contract for land for a new embassy. VFM Bang also raised the issue of the recent ban on catfish imports from Vietnam by three southern states. The Ambassador and VFM Bang also discussed at length religious freedom issues and the USG decision not to lift Vietnam's designation as a Country of Particular Concern for religious freedom violations (septel). End Summary.

**¶2.** (SBU) In an August 30 meeting with Vice Foreign Minister Le Van Bang, the Ambassador raised several areas of USG concern. On the subject of the APEC Export Control Conference, the Ambassador reminded Bang that the United States would like to know whether or not the GVN will act as co-host and emphasized that this remains a high priority for the USG. He urged the GVN to provide a positive response this week to the Deputy Secretary's recent message on this subject. The Ambassador also noted the USG's desire to receive an answer this week regarding Vietnam's willingness to negotiate and sign a contract for land for the new embassy compound (NEC). He warned that the GVN's tardiness in agreeing to reserve the Ciputra property for the NEC might cause years of delay in building a proper embassy here in Hanoi.

**¶3.** (SBU) The Ambassador also informed Bang of National Security Advisor Hadley's agreement to meet with Foreign Minister Nguyen Dy Nien when he visits Washington on September 23. He advised Bang that we are exploring a possible meeting between FM Nien and Secretary Rice, but her availability is not yet clear. The Ambassador also delivered Reftel points on the new Iraqi Constitution, as well as the fact sheet and the Secretary's statement. VFM Bang had no official comment in response to the Ambassador's presentation on Iraq.

**¶4.** (SBU) For his part, VFM Bang expressed the GVN's determination to make progress in its WTO accession negotiations. The GVN has concluded negotiations with India and China, along with a host of others, but the Vietnamese understand that everything depends on the United States. For example, Latin American countries and Australia and New Zealand will not proceed until the United States gives the "green light." "If the United States continues to block accession, there will be negative feelings here," Bang asserted.

**¶5.** (SBU) Continuing, the Vice Minister said that FM Nien originally did not wish to visit Washington. However, after PM Khai's visit, the MFA decided that Nien should meet personally with Secretary Rice to continue discussing issues raised in the PM's visit, particularly plans for APEC 2006 and the CPC designation. The GVN will inform Embassy Hanoi of the exact desiderata for FM Nien's visit soon. On the APEC Export Control Conference, the GVN considers this the most important current issue in relations among itself and the United States and China. As such, the GVN wants to proceed "meticulously" and "do more homework" before

committing to co-hosting the conference. The GVN understands its obligations as next year's APEC host, but the possible impact of this conference on U.S -China - Vietnam relations makes it a tough decision.

16. (SBU) On the NEC, VFM Bang said that the GVN is delighted that the USG has dropped the idea of the Russian property for the new Embassy. The new location will eventually be more central, hence better, and the GVN will work with the USG to close the deal. In closing, Bang raised the issue of the recent ban on catfish imports from Vietnam by three southern states, questioning whether these were "politically motivated." The Ambassador responded that we are seeking more information on the measures taken by Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. He stressed that the FDA ban on shipment from some companies is based on a scientific study that showed contamination in recent shipments. He encouraged the GVN to urge the Vietnamese seafood industry to better monitor itself. Bang countered that the recent tests were suspect, but the Ambassador assured him that the FDA's tests are impartial and scientific.

MARINE